In the Claims

Claims are amended as follows:

1. (previously presented) A method of transporting a supercarrier signal over a network span, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting said supercarrier signal, including messaging information, using a first protocol;

transparently demultiplexing said supercarrier signal into a plurality of trib signals;

transmitting said trib signals over said network span using a second protocol;

whereby the messaging information required to maintain said first protocol is included in said trib signals; and

after the transmission over the network span, transparently remultiplexing the trib signals into the supercarrier signal including the messaging information.

- 2. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the messaging information is used to transparently multiplex the trib signals into the supercarrier signal.
- 3. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein each trib signal is multiplexed from a plurality of basic signals.
- 4. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the messaging information includes both essential messaging information and desirable messaging information.
- 5. (previously presented) Apparatus for transporting a supercarrier signal including messaging information, received using a first protocol; over

a network span comprising a plurality of low bit rate network sections for transporting a plurality of trib signals using a second protocol; the apparatus having:

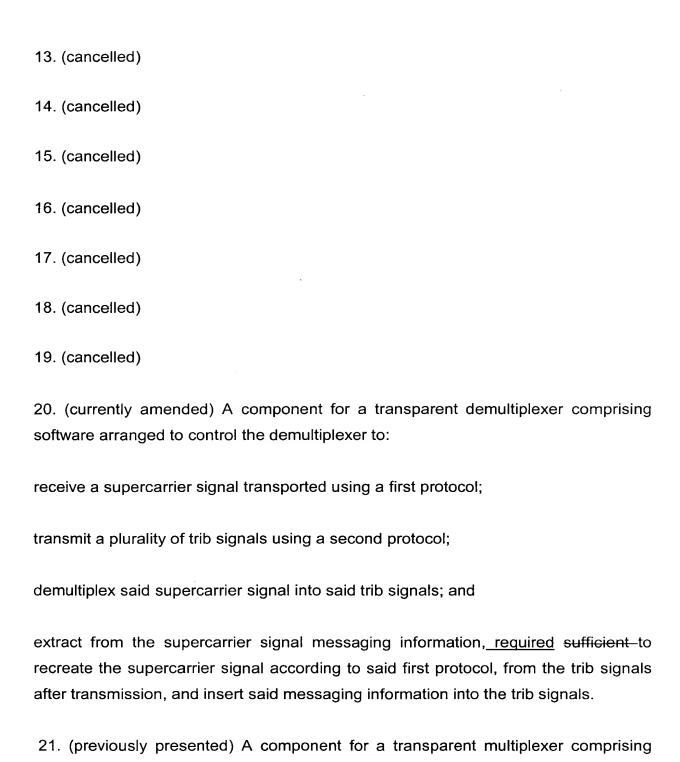
a transparent demultiplexer coupled to receive said supercarrier signal and demultiplex said supercarrier signal into said trib signals for transmission over said network span;

wherein said demultiplexer includes means for inserting into said plurality of trib signals the messaging information required to maintain said first protocol, and

a multiplexer connected between said network span and said network, for transparently remultiplexing the trib signals into the supercarrier signals including the messaging information.

6. (cancelled)

- 7. (previously presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the information required to maintain the first protocol is extracted from the trib signals.
- 8. (original) Apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the trib signals may pass in both directions along the network span.
- 9. (cancelled)
- 10. (cancelled)
- 11. (cancelled)
- 12. (cancelled)



software arranged to control the multiplexer to:

transmit a supercarrier signal using a first protocol;

receive a plurality of trib signals transported using a second protocol;

multiplex said trib signals into said supercarrier signal; and

extract messaging information from the trib signals and use said messaging information to recreate the supercarrier signal from the trib signals after transmission, according to said first protocol.